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BECOMING.

[Intimate friends of the late Major John Wesley Powell know that he was not only an anthropologist of high standing, an organizer and a born executive, a chief, educator and a reformer, for which qualities the University of Heidelberg conferred upon him the unusual honor of a doctor's degree, but that he also was a poet. In a former number of *The Monist* (Vol. V, No. 3) we published his poem on "The Soul," and we here insert another poem which describes evolution under the title "Becoming."]

OLD RIDDLE.

In marble walls as white as milk,
All lined with skin as soft as silk,
A golden apple doth appear,
In ambient bath of crystal clear.
There are no portals to behold,
Yet thieves break in and steal the gold.

SONG.

Island of beauty encircled
With girdle of filigree wave
Woven by tempest of ocean
Where tide follows moon as a slave—
Dream of my childhood, I love thee,
The home of my ancestors brave.

Glorious oak on the island
That stands by my forefather's home,
Down where the breakers are roaring,
Becrowned with their beautiful foam,
Why from thy shade have I wandered,
In turbulent regions to roam?

Musical robin of greenwood,
With bosom in blushes agleam,
Ever your memory haunts me
In moment of silence supreme,
Borne from the scenes of my childhood,
To revel in many a dream.

THE ISLAND.

The sands of hill an island may become;
For summer shower gathers them in rills,
The brook receives them, bears them on to creek,
Which gives to river, it to ocean vast,
And then beneath the waves the sands are stayed—
An island egg in nest of sea is laid.

The island germ is fed by every rain
That falls among the hills where rivers run;
More sands from year to year and age to age
Come down with rains that fall from roaring storms
That ever ride on air from sea to land,
Until through waves there bursts an island grand.

THE OAK.

A seed a giant tree at last becomes;
For, planted well in soil of ocean's isle,

A treelet bourgeons from the acorn's heart,
Which penetrates the earth with hungry roots
And stretches arms to reach vivific light,
Its leaves in love with day, its roots with night.

And many a storm the creeping rootlets feed,
And many a zephyr caters deft to leaves,
And many a sunbeam leaves the orb of light
In journey swift past meteor and cloud
To marry crystal drops of summer rain
With yearning molecules of southern breeze,
Until as oak the treelet vies with pine
And bears in sturdy arms the pendent vine.

THE ROBIN.

An egg with turkis spots a robin holds:
The germ, sequestered safe in marble walls,
Is warmed to life by mother's tender care,
Who gathers crumbs from cottage tables cast
And fruit from meadow, copse, and forest tree.
The nestling, sconced in honeysuckle home,
Is neophyte that yet must learn to roam.

On welcome store of food the birdlet grows,
Evolving fingered feet with clasping skill
To perch upon the blossom-bearing bough,
With wings to hover over land and sea,
And eyes to revel far in scenes of light,
And tongue to give a loving mate delight.

THE LESSON.

The bird that sings on island tree,
The tree that stand on ocean's isle,

The isle that sleeps in boundless sea,
Forever poet's thought beguile.
O, beautiful isle, O, glorious tree,
O, musical bird, teach wisdom to me!

The word of truth is this they give to him
Who ponders well the meaning deep of world:
What is ne'er was, and will not be again;
What is becomes by increments minute,
And wondrous transformation is performed—
The hills dissolve, an island grows apace;
From storm and air the seed becomes a tree;
While atoms join to make the bird so fair,
The robin-redbreast, flying through the air.

THE COMING OF ISLANDS.

O, beautiful isle of the sea—
Embraced in its billowy arms,
Caressed by its pulsating tides
And kissed by its tremulous waves
And fed by the rivers of land—
Your life is the wine of the land!

The isle that gems the shore shall mainland be
And tide-swept bank shall mountain summit crown,
Plateau shall be submerged as ocean floor,
And lofty peak beneath the deep sea sink,
In sure obedience to cosmic force
As alternating generations come,
When land to sea and sea to land gives birth,
Evolving continental forms of earth.

THE COMING OF TREES.

O, glorious tree of the isle—
Upborne on its wave-beaten breast,
Caressed by the matinal wind
And kissed by the vespentine breeze
And fed by the nourishing storm—
Your life is the wine of the storm!

In long procession through the æons come
The arborescent generations vast,
Evolving with the many forms of land;
The fit to life, unfit to death consigned;
In adaptation yielding everywhere—
With sweet consent in zones of tempered wind,
With lusty growth where tropics ardent woo,
And gnarled conformity to arctic storms—
Till earth is clothed with multitudinous forms.

THE COMING OF BIRDS.

O, musical bird of the tree—
Becradled on pendulous bough,
Caressed by the bountiful leaves
And kissed by the odorous flowers
And fed on the beautiful fruit—
Your life is the wine of the fruit!

Then tribes of birds adown the ages come,
In generations numbered like the years,
With fitting kind for every habitat
For such as win sweet life by high emprise
With winged endeavor, giving form and skill

In flight from tree to tree and clime to clime,
While groves and sky are filled with music sweet—
A vast inheritance of plume and song,
Evolving as the ages course along.

THE NEW CREATION.

To him who lingers e'er on narrow shore
Nor heights of land nor depths of sea are known;
For pleasure's flotsom, tossed on folly's foam,
With flow and ebb of purpose strong and weak,
Forever chafes the marge of common life,
While days and years pass on in weary strife.

The wise man goes beyond the seeming thing—
The rocks and shoals of hither shore of cause—
Abroad on strandless, wide, unfathomed sea
Of being, doing, and becoming world,
And, borne afar by sail of thought, he learns
That new creation which the prophets saw
Is cryptic growth of universal law.

SONG.

All islands encircled by murmuring sea,
All trees that are clustered in musical grove,
All birds of the forest that joyfully sing,
A tale of becoming in harmony bring.

In bed of the sea is the nest of the isle,
In heart of the isle is the nest of the tree,
In arms of the tree is the nest of the bird,
And voice of the nestling in music is heard.

The cantion they warble on morn of their birth,
Continued as daybreak encircles the earth,
While longitudes wheel to the matinal light,
Is heard as the æons proceed in their flight.

From croak of the frog to the voice of the lark,
From creeping of reptile to soaring of bird,
The way of becoming is long, very long—
The wonderful theme of their matinal song.

We come, O we come down the mystical years,
Unreckoned in lore of the sages and seers,
Through bundles of ages, as time gathers sheaves,
We come like the army of vernal-tide leaves.